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KENTUCKY MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL DRUG CHARGES

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. – Mark J. Cole, 31, of Russell, Kentucky, pleaded guilty today in federal court before United States District Judge Robert C. Chambers to distribution of 28 grams or more of crack cocaine and aiding and abetting. Cole admitted that on November 24, 2010, he and an associate sold three bags of crack cocaine, each weighing slightly less than one ounce, to an undercover agent working with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in exchange for \$3,300. The prearranged drug transaction took place at the Smokin' Aces store that was located in Huntington. Cole further admitted that on December 8, 2010, he sold two bags containing crack cocaine to an undercover ATF agent in exchange for \$2,180. The drug transaction also took place at the Smokin' Aces store that was located in Huntington.

Cole faces up to 40 years in prison and a \$5 million fine when he is sentenced on November 7, 2011.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Assistant United States Attorney Joshua Hanks is in charge of the prosecution.

This case is being prosecuted as part of a yearlong undercover operation that targeted illegal drugs and firearms crimes in the Huntington area. The operation was led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and assisted by the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Huntington Police Department, and various other law enforcement agencies. It was announced to the public in March after a grand jury returned indictments against 55 defendants.

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